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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 NOUAKCHOTT 000721

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SUBJECT: AU-LED INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS DELEGATION SETS
THE BAR LOW

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires Dennis Hankins for reasons 1.4 (b and d)

¶1. (C) Summary: The mid-level AU and other organizations delegation visiting Mauritania has set the bar low for the regime -- asking for full liberation of President Abdallahi, Abdallahi's participation in the discussions for an exit to the crisis, and early Presidential elections to re-establish constitutional order. The delegation is doubtful it will find any breakthrough prior to the next international meeting on Mauritania in Brussels on December 12. The AU head of delegation is aware his delegation's position comes short of the U.S. position but feels that is the best "consensus view" the delegation can present. End Summary

¶2. (C) Charge participated December 6 in a briefing offered by the African Union's representative to the European Union, Ambassador Mahamat Saleh Annadif, who is heading the AU, EU, UN, OIC, Arab League, and Francophonie delegation to Mauritania. The briefing was offered for the four resident Security Council P5 members (U.S., France, China and Russia) as well as South Africa as the sole African Security Council non-permanent member represented in Mauritania. Annadif said the delegation had met earlier in the day with General Aziz and would meet December 7 with President Abdallahi in Lemden. He had told General Aziz the international position was united in condemnation of the coup and said the delegation had three primary demands: (1) the immediate and unconditional release of President Abdallahi, (2) President Abdallahi's full participation in the political dialogue for a resolution to the crisis, and (3) early presidential elections leading to the re-establishment of constitutional order. Aziz had offered his standard and imprecise assurances that the National Dialogue for Democracy would meet "soon" with every likelihood that it would recommend early presidential elections. Aziz told the delegation President Abdallahi would be liberated "before the end of the year."

¶3. (C) Annadif told the Security Council representatives he saw nothing new in Aziz' position and found no assurance in the vague "liberation before the end of December." Responding to a question from the Arab League representative in the delegation, UNDP ResRep Ribeiro confirmed there was neither anything new nor definite in what Aziz had said. The Arab League participant, noting it was unlikely the delegation would get anything on their second and third

points, argued weakly that the offer of a full liberation should be seen as a positive sign. Ribeiro noted that the local press had low expectations for the delegation's visit and had already gone on line with a quote from an un-named member of the delegation that the trip "will be a failure." Annadif noted that the next step in the international process would be a report by the delegation for a multi-organization meeting to be held in Brussels on December 12.

14. (C) Charge took the floor to underline that the presentation offered by Annadif is significantly weaker than the position supported by the United States. Charge noted that a position that already assumes anticipated presidential elections also assumes that President Abdallahi must resign as part of the negotiations -- a position that gives the military exactly what it wants and thereby legitimizes the coup. Charge added that, even if one were to accept the idea of early elections, we remain extremely wary of any discussion that accepts General Aziz' "National Dialogue" as an acceptable template. Charge noted this strategy was a repeat of that used in 2005 -- a process the General openly boasts he successfully manipulated -- and cannot be seen as a credible mechanism. Charge accepted that President Abdallahi's "principled" position to date provided mediators little to work with but advocated that the delegation try to work on practical approaches with Abdallahi that did not start the dialogue with his resignation. The South African Ambassador also intervened voicing his government's concern about simply repeating the process of 2005 -- adding, "we need a solution that won't have us simply coming back to this

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point again." He also added that he saw the process of the National Dialogue being organized by Aziz as unacceptable to the FNDD and other major groups and, therefore, unrepresentative of Mauritanian views. He also questioned how Annadif's approach could work if President Abdallahi, who everyone recognizes as the legitimate President, simply refuses to resign (Annadif acknowledged but did not respond to the South African's points). The Chinese told Annadif that the U.S. and South Africa had already addressed his concerns.

15. (C) Annadif acknowledged that the Addis Ababa declaration of November 21 had scaled back the international community's demands on the regime but had significant value because it retains the key principles of denouncing the coup and recognizing President Abdallahi's legitimacy. Finding "a common denominator" had necessarily toned down the declaration but allowed for a unified position. Annadif noted that while the U.S. was not a direct party to the Addis Ababa meeting, the U.S. Mission to the African Union had been kept apprised of the discussions and had, in fact, offered some language changes used in the final declaration. Annadif noted that, while seeking to portray a common position, each organization and individual country was free to take a stronger individual position. He noted, for instance, that the AU and Francophonie had already suspended Mauritanian membership in their organizations.

16. (C) Comment: The decision to reduce the level of the head of delegation to the African Union's EU representative reflects the low expectations for the visit. The low "common denominator" position posited by the delegation isolates the U.S. as one of the very few to continue to call for President Abdallahi's return. The FNDD and Abdallahi are looking to us, unrealistically so, to toughen up the positions of our international colleagues. Nothing definitive is expected out of the December 12 meeting in Brussels, leaving any real action from the EU and, possibly, from the AU, until the end of the 120-day Article 96 consultation process in late January. By that time Prague and Algiers will have the respective presidencies of the EU and AU Peace and Security Council. End Comment.
HANKINS